WRITTEN ANSWERS TO STARRED QUESTION

Threat of Global Warming

*401. SHRI T.T.V. DHINAKARAN: Will the Minister of WATER RESOURCES be pleased to state:

(a) whether India has geared up to meet acute water shortage in view of the threat of global warming;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF WATER RESOURCES (PROF. SAIF-UD-DIN SOZ): (a) to (c) Realising the need for proper assessment of the effect of climate change on water resources and flow characteristics, studies have been taken up by Central Water Commission, Brahmaputra Board and National Institute of Hyderology with active participation of reputed academic institutes. The study is being coordinated by Central Water Commission. The objective of the study is to examine the effect of climate change on water resources with a view to (a) assess the extent of likely changes in the water availability and the flow characteristics, (b) evaluate the effect of such changes on the performance of the water resources system, and (c) to identify appropriate measures to address the effect of climate change on water resources.

With a view to mitigate the effect of possible changes in flow characteristics and ensure optimal utilization of available water resources, various measures for conservation of water, including creation of storages, traditional water conservation practices, rainwater harvesting and recharge to ground water are taken up by the respective State Governments. The interlinking of rivers project also aims at optimal utilisation of surplus flood water. The National Water Policy envisaged that efficiency of utilisation in all the diverse uses of water should be optimised, an awareness of water as a scare resource be fostered, the water resources be conserved and the availability augmented.

Fresh guidelines for recruitment of loan recovery agents

*406. SHRI MAHENDRA MOHAN:
DR (SHRIMATI) NAJMA A. HEPTULLA:

Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether RBI has issued fresh guidelines to be followed by the private banks for recruitment of loan recovery agents;

(b) if so, the details in this regard and whether these guidelines are drafted in consultation with the private banks;

(c) how the antecedents of recovery agents are being verified by the Banks;

(d) what role the State police plays in this regard; and

(e) how the fresh guidelines are different from the old guidelines?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) to (e) On 30th November, 2007, Reserve Bank of India (RBI) placed draft Guidelines on engaging Recovery Agents by scheduled commerical banks on its website, for feedback. Based on the feedback invited from individuals/organizations and banks, etc. including private sector banks, the guidelines have been revised and a second draft has been issued on 25th March, 2008 for feedback. Both the draft guidelines are available on RBI website www.rbi.org.in. Some of the important changes made in the second draft, *inter-alia,* include that:

- Banks to ensure that the agents engaged by them in the recovery process carry out, on a periodic basis, verification of antecedents of their employees—which may include police verification;
- The recovery agent would be required to carry an identity card issued by the bank or the recovery agency and also a copy of the notice/authorisation letter from the bank;
- Banks would be required to ensure that the notice/authorisation letter issued by them should also include the telephone numbers of the relevant recovery agents;
- Banks would also be required to record conversation between the recovery agents and the customers;
- Banks to place updated list of recovery agents on their websites;
- Where the bank is convinced, with appropriate proof, that the borrower is continuously making frivolous/veatious complaints, it may continue with the recovery proceedings through the Recovery Agents — even if a grievance/complaint is pending with them. In case where the subject matter of the borrower's dues might be sub-judice, banks should exercise utmost caution, as appropriate, in referring the matter to the recovery agents, depending on the circumstances of the case;
- Banks should have an appropriate mechanism in place to utilise the services of the credit counsellors for providing suitable counselling to the borrowers where it becomes aware that the case of a particular borrower deserves sympathetic consideration.

Post office savings scheme

*407. SHRI D. RAJA: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that recently the withdrawals from the various post office savings scheme are more than the deposits, leading to a negative growth;

(b) if so, the details thereof and reasons therefor; and

(c) what is Government's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) to (c) Yes, Sir. During April 2007 — February 2008 the withdrawals (including redemptions on maturity) under the Small Savings Schemes in Post Offices and Banks were Rs. 1,35,735 crore as against the gross small savings collections of Rs. 1,23,725 crore.

The trend in collections, *inter-alia,* reflect investor's preference for other alternative savings instruments. Over a period of time, investment options available have increased both in number and variety, offering a wider choice to investors for their savings. De-regulation of the interest rates relating to banks, financial institutions and debt markets have also contributed